

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application in view of the present amendment is respectfully requested.

The Examiner's cooperation in obtaining translations of the references utilized to reject the claims and in resolving the definiteness rejection of claim 4 is greatly appreciated.

Claims 1-5 have been rejected as unpatentable over Kim, JP 10258694A in view of Honda, JP 2000016304A. Claims 6 and 7 have been rejected as unpatentable over Kim in view of Honda and DuRocher et al., US 5,090,730. Claim 8 has been rejected as unpatentable over Kim in view of Honda and Fosse et al., US 2001/0020782A1. The Office Action states that it would have been obvious to provide the steering column of Kim with a slip joint connection as taught by Honda.

Claim 1 recites an intermediate steering column having a slip joint connection (42) permitting relative axial movement between first and second shafts and also a quick disconnect joint (64) between first and second shaft parts of the first shaft. Kim teaches a steering system for absorbing collision loads by fracturing a member (30 or 105) that connects parts of a steering shaft. It is respectfully submitted that providing the steering shaft of Kim with a slip joint connection would cause the shaft of Kim to axially shorten when a load was placed on it. Thus, the member (30 or 105) would not fracture and the resultant steering shaft would not perform the load absorbing function for which it was designed.

Further, claim 1 has been amended to recite pivoting of the first shaft part relative to the first U-joint to a first out of the way position and pivoting of the second shaft and the second shaft part relative to said second U-joint to a second out of the way position (Specification, pages 7-8, lines 12-24 & 1-3). The pivoting of both the second shaft and the second shaft part of the first shaft is not disclosed in either Kim or Honda.

Claim 9 has been added to further clarify and distinguish the claimed intermediate steering column from the prior art. Claim 9 recites the quick disconnect joint including a releasable fastener (70) which, when released, permits disconnection of the first and second shaft parts (60, 62), the releasable fastener (70) being operable to reconnect the first and second shaft parts (60, 62). Kim, Honda, and the other art of record do not disclose an intermediate steering column with this disconnect/reconnect feature and the other claimed features.

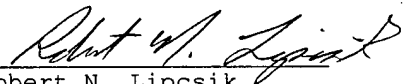
Claim 10 has been added to further clarify and distinguish the claimed intermediate steering column from the proposed combination of the Office Action. Claim 10 recites a quick disconnect joint that is not destroyed during disconnection. (Specification, page 7, lines 12-17). Kim, Honda, and the other art of record do not disclose an intermediate steering column with this and the other claimed features.

Consequently, claim 1, as well as claims 2-10 which depend from claim 1, are in condition for allowance. Allowance of the above identified application is respectfully requested.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made."

Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment in the fees for this amendment to our Deposit Account No. 20-0090.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

Claim 1 has been amended, as follows:

1. (Amended) An intermediate steering column for a vehicle having a firewall, said intermediate steering column comprising:
- a first U-joint connectable with a steering wheel of the vehicle;
  - a first shaft pivotally attached to said first U-joint and rotatable about a longitudinal axis of said first shaft upon rotation of said first U-joint;
  - a second shaft drivingly connected to said first shaft and having a slip joint connection with said first shaft permitting relative axial movement of said first and second shafts while maintaining a rotary drive connection between said first and second shafts;
  - a second U-joint pivotally attached to said second shaft and connectable with a steering mechanism of the vehicle; and
- said first shaft comprising first and second shaft parts and a quick disconnect joint between said first and second shaft parts permitting disconnection of said first and second shaft parts and pivoting of said first shaft part relative to said first U-joint to a first out of the way position and pivoting of said second shaft and said second shaft part relative to said second U-joint to a second out of the way position.

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